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Tyler Hospital's CT Scanner Gift To Belize Medics

Medical Center Hospital is donating its original CT (computerized tomography) scanner to the Central American country of Belize.

The hospital is replacing it with a $1.3 million General Electric scanner, said George B. Pearson, president of East Texas Hospital Foundation.

"The original scanner, the first one in the East Texas area, was put into operation in late 1977, at a cost of $500,000. It will be the first installed in Belize and will offer the physicians there diagnostic capabilities that they've never had before," Pearson said.

"We're pleased to be able to find a suitable use for this equipment, which advancing technology in this country has made essentially obsolete.

"It has served our hospital and its patients very well over the years and still has some good years left. However, CT technology has progressed to the point that relative to what is available in the area, this equipment is not current. For a medical environment such as that in Belize, it will be a significant diagnostic addition," Pearson said.

Arrangements for crating and shipping the two-ton scanner are being handled by Dr. Kerfoot Walker, Tyler's public health officer.

The Belize government has tentatively agreed to pay shipping costs for the massive scanner. Howe-Baker Engineers Inc. has agreed to crate the scanner and Tom Rudd of Allmark has agreed to store it until the scanner can be shipped to New Orleans for transport by ship to Belize, Walker said.

Walker just returned a week ago from Belize, to which he and other Tyler physicians, dentists and nurses have made frequent trips to provide health care since 1970.

The country, near the battle-torn countries of Guatemala and Honduras, is comparable in size to a 30-mile strip extending down either side of Interstate 20 from Shreveport to Dallas, Walker said.

The scanner, which uses a computer to measure X-ray absorption deep within the body and produces cross-sectional "slices" for study by a radiologist, will be installed in Belize City Hospital, Walker said.

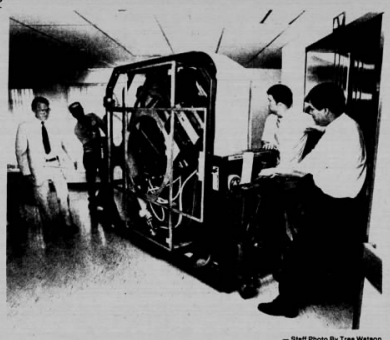
"This equipment will be a significant contribution to their physicians," Walker said.

"This is not the first time that Medical Center Hospital has supported public health services in Belize. Numerous members of the medical staff and hospital staff along with medical equipment have been involved in prior efforts. These individuals, who are volunteers, have given weeks of their vacation and other time off to this medical assistance program," Pearson said.

Amigos Internationales, headquartered in Athens, is the group through which Walker and other medical professionals from across the state offer their services in Belize.

"We want to be able to continue to upgrade the health of the population, where most people still go barefoot and live on dirt floors," Walker said.

"We are looking for contributions from local service clubs to pay for the training of a technician to operate the scanner. Several Central American countries have scanners and can provide a trainer, once we come up with the money for transportation and housing."



— Staff Photo By Tres Watson

MEDICAL CENTER SCANNER TO BE SENT TO SOUTH AMERICA
Pearson, Left, Oversees Disassemblying, Removal Of Scanner

Texas High Court To Hear Will Appeal

AUSTIN (AP) — The Texas Supreme Court agreed Wednesday to hear appeal arguments on a will contest case filed after the death of J.W. Croucher of El Paso.

The writ of error granted set oral arguments for Oct. 19.

His sons, James W. Croucher Jr. and Kenneth J. Croucher contested the will, alleging Virginia Croucher, his wife, exerted undue influence on the elder Croucher after he was hospitalized with mental and physical ailments.

A jury decided in favor of the sons and declared the will void.

Ousted Sheriff's Status Unaltered

By MARGARET WATSON
Staff Writer

The surprise twist of events Tuesday resulting in the dismissal of a burglary of a vehicle charge against former Smith County Sheriff J.B. Smith will not affect his ousted status, prosecutors said Wednesday.

The burglary charge was dropped Tuesday before trial, when the only eyewitness to the incident, former deputy Phil Fleming, refused to testify. Fleming said his testimony might tend to be self-incriminating.

Smith admitted in a December 1981 federal court hearing he poured gasoline on the car of Charles Everrett Winters on Jan. 21, 1978, fully intending to burn it. Smith denied Fleming's contention that he pried open a window, which would have constituted burglary.

The criminal charges against Smith are totally separate from the civil removal proceedings which resulted in Smith's removal from office last December for official misconduct, Assistant District Attorney Richard Moore said Wednesday.

Smith has appealed the civil removal to the 12th Court of Appeals in Tyler. Only a decision by the appeals court will affect his removal from office.

Moore said no decision has been made on proceeding with prosecution of criminal indictments for bribery and retaliation against a peace officer still pending against Smith. Fleming is not a witness in either case. Moore said prosecutors will have to evaluate the two remaining cases in view of the action on what Moore termed the state's strongest cases against Smith — the burglary charge and an official misconduct charge.

An official misconduct indictment was killed last week when Visiting Judge Marvin Blackburn ruled the charges were faulty.

Asked if the trial could have continued with the introduction of Fleming's sworn statements before a Smith County grand jury and in federal court in lieu of live testimony, Moore said that option had been considered.

"We discussed the possibility, but with the jury knowing he had refused to testify, it would have so weakened our case it was not logical to do it," Moore said today.

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